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AUTHOR Pajak, Edward F.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A discrepancy exists between teacher self-appraisal and reports of students and outside observers. Based on role theory this study explored some social correlates of teacher reports of classroom behavior. Data were collected from two sessions (88 teachers) at a staff development center. Teachers reported: (1) occurrence frequencies of nine classroom behaviors; (2) estimates of occurrence frequencies needed by their students and expected by their supervisor and colleagues; and (3) demographic information. Correlation analyses indicate teacher reports of their classroom behavior appear to be related to the perceptions teachers have of the needs and expectations of others in their role set. Teacher teaching experience, grade level, faculty size, and frequency of supervisor contact influence these perceptions. Whether teacher beliefs are accurate is not known. Other research suggests discrepancies between teachers, and between teachers and administrators, about classroom objectives. Further research is needed before implications for practice are clear. (BS)

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Role Set Determinants of Teacher Reports of Classroom Behavior

Edward F. Pajak
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Curriculum and Supervision
University of Georgia

Stephen E. Cramer
Data Analyst
Educational Research Laboratory
University of Georgia

Karen Konke
Doctoral Candidate
Dept. of Curriculum and Supervision
University of Georgia

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Teacher self-appraisal has been proposed recently as an important and desirable component of comprehensive evaluation systems (Redfern, 1980; Lewis, 1982; Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease, 1983). Yet, a review of the dozen or so studies involving teacher reports of classroom behavior (Hook and Rosenshine, 1979), suggests that teachers are not very accurate in describing what they actually do in practice. A discrepancy appears to exist between what teachers believe is happening in their classes and what occurs as reported by students or recorded by outside observers. A question that remains is: [illegible] does influence teacher self-reports?

The purpose of this study was to explore some social correlates of teacher reports of classroom behavior. Role theory served as the theoretical foundation for this study. Here, performance of a particular role in a given social system is viewed as resulting from interactions with the expectations of significant others who occupy positions within that system (Merton, 1957). Role set is defined as the set of other positions in an organization with which a given focal person interacts in the course of accomplishing his or her organizational role (Kahn, et al., 1964). As demands and expectations become known to a role incumbent, interactions between the incumbent and the members of his or her role set are considered likely to stabilize into what has been described as a collective structure of behavior (Allport, 1962; Weick, 1969; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1975).

We suggest that the concept of role set may be useful for understanding possible determinants of the self-reported behavior of teachers. Although self-reported behavior may not correspond directly to actual behavior in the classroom, we believe that teachers' perceptions of their own behavior will respond to and thus reflect the perceived needs and expectations of others in their role set, and specifically to the perceived needs of students and the expectations of supervisors and colleagues.

Method

Eighty-eight teachers in three southeastern states comprised the sample. Data were collected in a staff development center at two sessions separated by a three-day or seven-day interval. At the first meeting, teachers reported the frequencies of occurences of nine behaviors in their classrooms on an adapted version of Flanders' interaction analysis instrument, and also provided demographic information.

At a second meeting held three to seven days later, the teachers were given a similar instrument which asked them to indicate for each category of behavior how frequently they think the students in their class need that specific behavior to occur, how often they think their supervisor ("the person who most often observes your teaching") wants that behavior to occur, and how often they think other teachers in their school want that behavior to occur. The nine behavioral categories identified on the instrument were presented in a different order each time to minimize consistency of the response pattern. Again, frequencies were reported on a ten point scale ranging from "never" to "always".

All subjects thus provided an estimate of the actual frequency of occurences of nine categories of behavior in their own classroom, along with estimates of the frequencies of occurence needed by their students, and expected by their immediate supervisor and colleagues. A picture of overall classroom behavior was constructed. In addition, categories allowed us to isolate and examine the relationships among several narrower dimensions including direct teacher behavior, indirect teacher behavior, questioning behavior, and student behavior. Demographic factors likely to affect degree and quality of social interaction were also considered.

Analysis

Data from the 88 cases were analyzed using SAS (Helwig & Council, 1979). An initial run verified correlations of individual items making up the four Flanders dimensions: (1) Direct Teacher Talk, (2) Indirect Teacher Talk, (3) Student Talk, and (4) Teacher Questions. Frequency counts on demographic data led to slight modifications of the demographic and experience categories and abandonment of plans to analyze the data by sex.

Correlations of teacher reported behavior scores and teachers' expectations of students' needs, supervisor's wants, and colleagues' wants were performed for each dimension, for the total group and for each group as defined by the categorical variables. A summary of descriptive information characterizing the sample is presented in TABLE 1.

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

TABLE 1

Descriptive Summary

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PERCENT
Age		
20-29	20	23
30-39	37	42
40-49	20	23
50+	11	13
Sex		
Male	13	15
Female	75	85
Grade Level		
Elementary	65	74
Middle/High School	23	26
Years Experience		
1-4	19	22
5-12	41	47
13+	28	32
Size of Faculty		
<20	25	28
20-29	15	17
30+	48	55
Times Observed		
0	18	20
1	14	16
2	23	26
3	10	11
4+	23	26
Times Conferenced		
0	23	26
1	23	26
2	24	27
3+	18	20

Results

Based on the assumptions derived from role set theory as described above, eleven hypotheses were tested in all. The first hypothesis was that:

H_1 Reported overall classroom behavior will be related to the teachers' perceptions of students' needs, supervisor's wants, and colleagues' wants.

As predicted (see Table 2), correlations of classroom behavior with needs and expectations demonstrated significant moderate relationships on all dimensions ($\bar{r}$ = .53), supporting the general notion that teacher perceptions of their own classroom behavior may be influenced by others in the teacher's role set.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Work by Jackson (1969) suggests that teachers exhibit something of a dual allegiance. On the one hand, they enforce the institutional standards of performance and behavior required by the school, while simultaneously mitigating these standards when responding to the fleeting and idiosyncratic needs and personalities of students. On the basis of Flanders' conception of direct teacher talk as serving to restrict student freedom in the classroom, and indirect teacher talk, teacher questioning, and student talk as behaviors serving to expand student freedom in the classroom, the following hypotheses were proposed:

TABLE 2

Correlation of Reported Behavior with Perceived Students' Needs, Supervisor's Wants, and Colleagues' Wants

Reported Classroom Behavior	Students' Needs (N=88)	Supervisor's Wants (N=88)	Colleagues' Wants (N=88)
Direct Teacher Talk	.71	.67	.30
Indirect Teacher Talk	.61	.51	.41
Teacher Questioning	.45	.43	.50
Student Talk	.40	.32	.35

All correlations significant at $p \leq .01$

H_2: Reported direct teacher talk will be more closely related to the supervisor's and colleagues' wants than to students' needs.

H_3: Reported indirect teacher talk will be more closely realted to students' needs than to supervisor's or colleagues' wants.

H_4: Reported teacher questioning will be more closely related to students' needs than to supervisor's or colleagues' wants.

H_5: Reported student talk will be more closely related to students' needs than to supervisor's or colleagues' wants.

As illustrated in TABLE 2, indirect teacher talk and student talk were most highly correlated with perceptions of students' needs. Contrary to prediction, direct teacher talk also was most highly related to perceived students' needs. Teacher questioning correlated most highly with colleagues' wants. Although none of the differences between correlations was significant at the .05 level, the findings seem to indicate that students may have a slightly more salient influence as members of the teacher's role set on teachers' perceptions of classroom events. The exception of teacher questioning may be due to the fact that this dimension was derived from a single item and, therefore, is

likely to be less reliable than the dimensions of direct teacher talk, indirect teacher talk, and student talk, which were comprised of two or three items each.

With the expectation that younger teachers would tend to identify more closely with their students than older teachers, lacking the sobering and socializing influence of experience, it was predicted that:

H_6: The younger the teacher, the more reported classroom behavior will be related to students' needs.

No systematic pattern of relationships between teacher behavior and student needs was found by age category (see TABLE 3). Only teachers in the 30-39 age range showed significant agreement with expectations of student needs for all four dimensions. Teachers aged 20-29 and 40-49 showed agreement with students on direct teacher behavior and indirect teacher behavior, while the behavior of teachers 50 or over showed agreement with student needs only on teacher questioning. Contrary to predictions, the highest correlations between reported classroom behavior and perceived students' needs were found for teachers in the 40-49 age range, suggesting that experience in the classroom may make teachers more, rather than less, responsive to students.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

On the basis of the observtion that elementary schools tend to be more nurturant than middle or high schools because of the type of client

TABLE 3

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Students' Needs by Age of Teacher

Reported Classroom Behavior	Age 20-29 (N=20)	Age 30-39 (N=37)	Age 40-49 (N=20)	Age 50+ (N=11)
Direct Teacher Talk	.61*	.70*	.87*	.55
Indirect Teacher Talk	.68*	.51*	.82*	.59
Teacher Questioning	.27	.52*	.25	.68**
Student Talk	.21	.50*	.22	.55

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

they serve, and the fact that middle and high schools tend to be organized in a more hierarchical manner, we proposed that:

H_7: Elementary school teachers' reports of classroom behavior will relate more closely to the needs of students; middle and high school teachers' reports of classroom behavior will relate more closely to the expectations of the supervisor.

Elementary teachers' reported behavior correlated higher with student needs than supervisor wants on all four dimensions (see TABLE 4) although only significantly higher on student talk. Middle and high school teachers, on the other hand, agreed about equally with supervisor's wants and students' needs on direct and indirect teacher talk, and significantly more with the supervisor's wants on the student talk dimension. The hypothesized relationship between grade level taught and responsiveness to student needs and supervisor wants, thus, appears to have weak support.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The influence over time of socialization and self selection on a faculty group might be expected to result in clearer understanding and greater agreement concerning norms governing behavior in the classroom. At the same time, teachers might be expected to become less student-

TABLE 4

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Supervisor's Wants and Students' Needs by Grade Level Taught

Reported Classroom Behavior		Elementary (N=65)	Middle/High School (N=16)
Direct Teacher Talk	Supervisors' Wants	.65*	.72*
	Students' Needs	.71*	.70*
Indirect Teacher Talk	Supervisor's Wants	.47*	.61**
	Students' Needs	.54*	.58**
Teacher Questioning	Supervisor's Wants	.36*	.35
	Students' Needs	.38*	.26
Student Talk	Supervisor's Wants	.23	.60**
	Students' Needs	.35*	.12

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

oriented and more colleague-oriented in their thinking. It was hypothesized, therefore, that:

H_8: The more experienced the teacher, the more reported classroom behavior will be related to colleagues' wants, and the less reported classroom behavior will be related to students' needs.

Teachers with less than five years experience agreed with colleagues' wants only on indirect teacher talk, while teachers with over five years experience reported classroom behavior that correlated with colleagues' wants on all four dimensions (see TABLE 5). A similar pattern of agreement, however, was found between teachers' reported behavior and students' needs. It would appear that more experienced teachers view their classroom behavior as both meeting students' needs and conforming to colleagues' expectations.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Because smaller groups allow more contact among members than larger groups, thereby encouraging greater intimacy and less anonymity, we predicted that:

H_9: The smaller the faculty to which a teacher belongs, the more reported classroom behavior will correlate with colleagues' wants.

TABLE 5

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Colleagues' Wants and Students' Needs by Number of Years Experience

Reported Classroom Behavior		Years Exp. 1-4 (N=19)	Years Exp. 5-12 (N-41)	Year Exp. 13+ (N-29)
Direct Teacher Talk	Colleagues' Wants	.30	.58*	.42**
	Students' Needs	.42	.68*	.85*
Indirect Teacher Talk	Colleagues' Wants	.56**	.37**	.41**
	Students' Needs	.53**	.60*	.73*
Teacher Questioning	Colleagues' Wants	.15	.41*	.80*
	Students' Needs	.12	.54*	.43**
Student Talk	Colleagues' Wants	.09	.31**	.52**
	Students' Needs	.18	.43*	.47**

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

As predicted, teachers from schools with faculties of under 20 agreed with colleagues' wants on all four dimensions (see TABLE 6). Teachers in middle-sized schools (20-29) agreed with their colleagues only on direct teacher behavior, while teachers in schools with larger faculties (30 or more) agreed with colleagues' wants on indirect teacher behavior and teacher questions but not on the other two dimensions. The slight tendency toward agreement with colleagues in the larger schools as compared to middle-sized schools conceivably may be due to departmental or team arrangements in the larger schools which could serve as reference groups.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

The last two hypotheses to be tested dealt with the frequency of contact a teacher had with his or her supervisor. More contact in the form of classroom observations and supervisory conferences might be expected to result in greater agreement between the supervisor and the teacher as expectations and behaviors are mutually clarified and adapted. We proposed, therefore, that:

H_{10}: The more often a teacher is observed by a supervisor, the more the teacher's reported behavior will be related to the supervisor's wants.

TABLE 6

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Colleague Wants by Size of Faculty

Reported Classroom Behavior	Size < 20 (N=25)	Size 20-29 (N=15)	Size ≥ 30 (N=48)
Direct Teacher Talk	.70*	.66**	.27
Indirect Teacher Talk	.68*	.47	.32**
Teacher Questioning	.43**	.38	.56*
Student Talk	.62*	.10	.23

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

H_{11}: The more often a teacher meets in conference with a supervisor, the more the teacher's reported behavior will be related to the supervisor's wants.

The findings reported in TABLE 7 and TABLE 8 are very similar and tend to support the relationships hypothesized, but only up to a point. The more times a teacher was observed or met with a supervisor in a conference, the closer reported behavior in the classroom agreed with perception of supervisor expectations. However, teachers who were observed four or more times or who had three or more supervisory conferences in the past year reported classroom behavior that agreed with their perceptions of supervisor expectations on only one ~~(direct teacher talk or~~ (indirect teacher talk) ~~respectively)~~ dimension. The most plausible explanation for this unexpected curvilinear relationship, we believe, is that given the nature of supervision in most schools those teachers who are observed four or more times and who meet frequently in supervisory conferences tend to be those teachers who are having difficulties, or whose teaching styles may not conform to administrative preferences. Such teachers are apparently very much aware that their classroom behavior does not conform to the expectations of their supervisors.

INSERT TABLE 7 and TABLE 8

ABOUT HERE

TABLE 7

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Supervisor's Wants by Number of Times Observed by Supervisor

Reported Classroom Behavior	Times Observed During Past Twelve Months			
	Never (N=17)	Once (N=14)	2 or 3 (N=33)	≥ 4 (N=23)
Direct Teacher Talk	.77*	.65**	.78*	.31
Indirect Teacher Talk	.04	.62**	.73*	.57*
Teacher Questioning	.21	.55**	.66*	.09
Student Talk	-.42	.57**	.45*	.36

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

TABLE 8

Correlation of Reported Classroom Behavior with Perceived Supervisor's Wants by Number of Times Met in Supervisory Conference

Reported Classroom Behavior	Times Conferenced During Past Twelve Months			
	Never (N=23)	Once (N=23)	Twice (N=24)	≥ 3 (N=17)
Direct Teacher Talk	.77*	.72*	.71*	.19
Indirect Teacher Talk	.21	.67*	.77*	.58**
Teacher Questioning	.35	.50*	.67*	.08
Student Talk	-.26	.80*	.28	.38

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

Discussion

Teacher reports of their own classroom behavior appear to be related to the perceptions teachers have of the needs and expectations of others in their role set. These perceptions are in turn influenced by factors such as the age and experience of the teacher, grade level taught, size of faculty, and frequency of contact with a supervisor.

The teachers who participated in this study seem to believe that their own classroom behavior, by and large, does meet students' needs and conforms to the expectations of supervisors and colleagues. We really have no way of knowing at this point whether these beliefs are in fact accurate. Work done by others, however, suggests that what happens in one classroom typically has little relation or direct impact on what happens in another classroom within the same school (Lortie, 1975; Pellegrin, 1976), and there also seems to be little real consensus among teachers or between teachers and administrators about what schools are doing or are trying to do (Deal and Celotti, 1980).

If absence of agreement is viewed simply as a problem of communication, then the fact that teacher reports of their own classroom behavior seem to be related to their perceptions of the needs and wants of others in their role set suggests that making the needs and expectations of others more explicit might prove beneficial as part of a comprehensive evaluation system. Discrepancies between what one does and what others expect can also be accounted for, however, by the position one occupies in the organizational hierarchy, by philosophical differences, or by legitimate disagreements in professional judgment. Focusing attention on discrepancies, therefore, could conceivably

jeopardize social cohesiveness in such cases by undermining the illusion of consensus which permits social interaction to take place with minimal overt conflict. Further research into the nature of teacher's perceptions of their own behavior and the needs and expectations of others in their role set is needed before implications for practice are clear.

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